

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

October 21, 2010

JUGHANDLE CREEK FARM AND NATURE CENTER ENHANCEMENT PLANNING, PHASE II

Project No. 07-061-02

Project Manager: Joel Gerwein

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$275,000 to Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) for architectural programming, schematic designs and construction cost estimates for additional educational and lodging facilities and an improved trail system, to be installed at the JCFNC property in Caspar.

LOCATION: Caspar, Mendocino County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Environmental Education

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site Enhancement Plan](#)

Exhibit 3: [Site photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 3119 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$275,000 (two hundred seventy five thousand dollars) to the Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) to prepare architectural programs, schematic designs and construction cost estimates for additional educational and lodging facilities and an improved trail system at the nature center, subject to the following condition: prior to the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, including a budget and project schedule and the names and qualifications of any contractor to be retained by JCFNC to undertake work on the project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Section 31119 (Chapter 3) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding educational projects.
3. JCFNC is an organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$275,000 to Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) to prepare architectural programs, schematic designs and construction cost estimates for additional educational and lodging facilities and an improved trail system at the nature center. The facilities to be designed include an outdoor teaching shelter, bathhouse/restrooms, and bunk cabins. The trail system improvements will consist of upgrades to a 1.75 mile forest trail system to meet ADA access standards. This project will provide architectural designs for facilities called for in the JCFNC Access and Education Enhancement Plan (Exhibit 2), which was developed in part with Conservancy funding. The Enhancement Plan provides the overall vision to ensure that plans for additional lodging, classrooms, sanitary facilities, and trail improvements at JCFNC’s site are integrated and complementary.

JCFNC’s grounds are located adjacent to the town of Caspar, just east of Highway One, between Fort Bragg and Mendocino (Exhibit 1). The site is just south of and adjacent to Jughandle State Reserve, and contains publicly accessible trails connecting to trails in the State Reserve. The site totals approximately 35 acres, and includes forests and meadows, nature trails, a century-old Victorian farmhouse, a campground area, and a nursery and greenhouse used by school and youth groups to grow native plants for restoration projects (Exhibit 3). Jughandle Creek and an unnamed creek are located adjacent to the site.

JCFNC is a nonprofit organization that provides environmental education programs for youth from Mendocino County and other areas, affordable lodging and camping for tourists and environmental groups, and a greenhouse and nursery where students, youth groups and others can learn about and participate in native plant restoration projects. JCFNC provides environmental education programs for 800 to 1,000 Mendocino County students each year, including a summer day camp for 100 students sponsored by the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District. In addition, approximately 2,000 people stay overnight at JCFNC’s farmhouse and campground each year. These overnight visitors range from tourists seeking affordable accommodations along the Mendocino coast to volunteers engaged in ecological restoration projects in the area. The great value of JCFNC’s programs is recognized by schools, environmental groups, and government agencies throughout the area (Exhibit 4). Helene Chalfin, JCFNC’s Education Director, was honored by the Mendocino Coast Environmental Partnership with their 2007 Local Environmentalist Award.

The proposed additional lodgings, classrooms, and sanitary facilities would greatly enhance JCFNC's ability to provide educational programs and to support groups involved in restoration. Additional affordable lodging, such as bunk cabins, could make it possible for schools and youth groups on a limited budget to visit JCFNC's site, Jughandle State Reserve, and the Mendocino coast. An indoor classroom and an open-sided teaching shelter would allow JCFNC to provide educational programming in inclement weather. Currently, JCFNC's programming is greatly reduced during the winter and other inclement weather periods because of the lack of sheltered classroom areas. Additional bathrooms, sinks for hand-washing, and shower facilities would greatly enhance JCFNC's ability to serve large student groups and to host groups undertaking restoration activities. Existing sanitary facilities for visitors are currently limited to two outhouses, four faucets and a sink at the campground area, and two full bathrooms and one half-bath in the farmhouse.

JCFNC has demonstrated its ability to work with subcontractors and permitting agencies to plan for facilities enhancement through its efficient implementation of Phase I of the enhancement planning project. It is anticipated that when the architectural designs are completed, JCFNC will return to the Conservancy with a request for additional funding to implement the project. No such funding has yet been promised or committed.

Site Description: As noted above, the JCFNC site is comprised of 35 acres, and includes forests and meadows, nature trails, a century-old Victorian farmhouse, a campground area, and a nursery and greenhouse. The site is located adjacent to Highway One just east of the town of Caspar in Mendocino County. Jughandle Creek Farm was originally a dairy ranch supporting cows and sheep. The farmhouse, which currently provides lodging for up to 30 visitors, was built in the 1870's and the creamery (a former dairy barn), which currently serves as office space and residence for the JCFNC caretaker, was built about 1938. JCFNC was established at the same time as the Jughandle State Reserve, and was intended to provide lodging and educational facilities to enhance public enjoyment of the reserve. The site contains 1.75 miles of trails, linking to the 1,000 acre Jughandle State Reserve's trail network.

JCFNC's location on the coast, right on Highway One, halfway between Fort Bragg and Mendocino, with easy access to the ocean, several State Parks, Jackson State Forest and nearby amenities, makes the site an important location for providing environmental education focused on coastal resources, for supporting coastal restoration projects, and for providing affordable lodgings to enhance access to the coast for low-income travelers.

Project History: The Conservancy authorized a grant of \$87,300 for Phase I of this project on September 20, 2007. Phase I involved conducting technical studies (septic, soils, hydrological, wetland, and botanical) and preparation of an education and access enhancement plan with proposed new facilities and locations. Phase I was completed in March 2010. JCFNC has been a partner in several restoration projects that the Conservancy supported on the Mendocino Coast in recent years, including the Garcia River, the Stornetta Brothers Ranch, and the Point Cabrillo Lightstation. JCFNC worked with youth groups to propagate and plant native plants for these projects. JCFNC was identified by the Conservancy several years ago as a candidate for a grant to enhance environmental education on the Mendocino Coast. The Conservancy supported the construction of a boardwalk trail on the JCFNC site in the 1970s. The current authorization would include designs for an ADA upgrade of the original boardwalk trail.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$275,000
Community Foundation of Mendocino	\$4,000
JCFNC	\$12,575
Mendocino County Fire Safe Council	\$3,000
Individual Donations	<u>\$6,000</u>
Total Project Costs	\$300,575

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 08/09 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of funds for projects that promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources and that carry out the Conservancy's statutory mission under Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. The proposed project promotes access to and enjoyment of natural resources by assisting in the development of facilities that will enhance JCFNC's ability to provide educational programs and to support groups involved in restoration of coastal resources. Consistency of the project with the Conservancy's statutory mission is discussed below in "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation."

The project is supported by the contribution of funds from a variety of other sources. JCFNC has provided funds for initial architectural conceptual design maps, as well as for the review of wastewater designs for the facilities expansion and for invasive gorse control. Funds from the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council also paid for invasive gorse control work. Funds provided by the Community Foundation of Mendocino will pay for the installation of a Roof Water Catchment System to reduce groundwater usage by the facility and educate visitors about water conservation. Individual donations will fund additional rainwater storage and improvements to the nursery area's irrigation system. Consistent with the Conservancy's prioritization requirements for using Proposition 84 funds, the project will provide a significant non-state match, as described above.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The JCFNC project is undertaken pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31119 of Chapter 3 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation.

Section 31119(a)(1) enables the Conservancy to undertake educational projects for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement and maintenance of coastal resources, and may award grants to nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and public agencies for those purposes. The proposed project will enhance the existing environmental education program at JCFNC, allowing for increased participation during much of the year, and providing enhanced facilities for overnight stays by low-income groups.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective 3d** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will fund planning and design for improvements to an environmental education center.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on June 4, 2009, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The proposed project has a broad level of support from local schools and school districts, public agencies and officials, environmental education programs, nonprofit organizations, and the public in general (Exhibit 4). Project supporters include: the Fort Bragg City Council, the California Native Plant Society, and the Fort Bragg Unified School District.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Mendocino County.
5. **Need:** Although JCFNC has obtained grants and donations from a variety of other sources, these sources cannot provide enough funds to undertake the architectural design work for additional facilities. Conservancy funds are essential to complete the design work necessary to add needed facilities to JCFNC.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** JCFNC is located in a coastal watershed containing the unique Jughandle Ecological Staircase. Few places on earth display a more complete record of ecological succession. Each of the five terraces in the Ecological Staircase represents one stage in a progression of successional environments. JCFNC plays an important role in providing interpretive programs and access to this unique example of ecological succession and landscape evolution on the coast, as well as providing environmental education generally related to coastal ecosystems. While JCFNC's education programs primarily serve local students, the site also serves students from the San Francisco Bay Area and other parts of Northern California. JCFNC has also hosted student groups from around the country participating in restoration projects on the Mendocino coast.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Proposed facilities are located east of Highway One, at a minimum elevation of approximately 80 feet above sea level. Facilities are therefore not expected to be vulnerable to sea level rise by the year 2100.

Additional Criteria

10. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
11. **Readiness:** JCFNC has already completed a thorough interview and selection process for architectural design teams for this project, and is ready to proceed with the project in a timely manner.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
13. **Cooperation:** JCFNC is working together with Mendocino and Fort Bragg Unified School Districts, the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation to carry out its environmental education and ecological restoration programs.
14. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** JCFNC may face increased threat from wildfire due to increased temperatures and the possibility of reduced precipitation and coastal fog. JCFNC will continue to manage the forest on its property to reduce the threat of wildfire, particularly through control of invasive gorse, which is highly flammable.
15. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** Architectural designs will feature small-scale structures that model energy efficiency and renewable energy resources. This approach will minimize greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction and operation of the facilities in the future.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: The project is statutorily exempt from review of environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it involves planning for possible future actions which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262). Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon Conservancy approval of the project.